



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT

MAY 28 2015

Traci L. Hughes, Esquire
Director
District of Columbia Office of Open Government
Board of Ethics and Government Accountability
441 4th Street, N.W., Suite 540 South
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Ms. Hughes:

At the May 7, 2015, public oversight roundtable on the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) Body-Worn Camera (BWC) Program, you testified in opposition to the Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Support Amendment Act of 2015, Title III, Subtitle A. Body-Worn Camera Regulation and Reporting Requirements, calling it “unnecessary” and “exhaustive.” As part of your argument, you stated that “[v]ideo editing technology is so readily available at low cost, or for free, that MPD will be hard pressed to assert it does not have access to the very same technology that we all do in some rudimentary way on our smartphones and tablets on up to more advanced professional editing software.” From your statement, it appears that you are under the mistaken belief that the complex and labor-intensive task of redacting BWC footage to protect the privacy and, at times, the lives of crime victims and witnesses can be performed simply by downloading a free app or purchasing a subscription to Adobe Acrobat Premiere.

However, in an effort to work cooperatively to best achieve the level of governmental transparency for which you advocate, MPD will draft and submit for your approval a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that will vest with your office the authority to review, redact, and release MPD BWC videos in accordance with the mandates of the D.C. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). As the director of an independent office under the Board of Ethics and Government Accountability charged with advancing open governance in the District of Columbia, you serve in your position as the Chief FOIA Officer for the District of Columbia, which uniquely positions your office and you to lead in these efforts. This role is also supported by your previous experience as FOIA Officer for MPD. You testified regarding the “seemingly national climate of distrust of law enforcement by communities that have long felt disenfranchised, disengaged, and quite frankly targeted by the very people charged with keeping them safe.” I am confident that together, we can do our part to overcome this perception through the process created by this MOU, leveraging your expertise and your independent agency by releasing BWC video footage to the public, while ensuring that the privacy interests are properly protected for our citizens and particularly witnesses/victims of crime.

Please inform as soon as possible whether you will agree to an MOU, so that we can move forward on this important public safety initiative.

Sincerely,

Cathy L. Lanier
Chief of Police

cc: Mayor Muriel E. Bowser
Chairman Phil Mendelson, Council of the District of Columbia
Councilmember Kenyon R. McDuffie, Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary